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**SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL-MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS  
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

December 1985

Prepared by the Federal Research Division of  
the Library of Congress under an interagency agreement

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## PREFACE

This chronology is organized by region, country, and date of event. The date of event is sometimes difficult to determine because it varies from source to source. Some sources cite the actual date of the incident whereas others appear to use the official news release dateline. When possible, the actual date of the occurrence is listed.

Analysts contributing to this chronology are LaVerle Berry, Robert Handloff, Mary Louise Harmon, R. Thomas Lenaghan, Kenneth Liberstein, and Rachel Warner.

SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL-MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS  
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

PAGE:1

December 1985

East/Central Africa

Congo

08/12/85 President Sassou Nguesso reshuffles his cabinet, reducing the number of ministers from 27 to 20, in a move aimed at both streamlining operations and consolidating his control. Antoine Ndinga-Oba remains Foreign Minister and Aime Emmanuel Yoka, although losing his cabinet rank, remains Chief of Staff.

Tanzania

28/12/85 Eight Army officers and one civilian are sentenced to life imprisonment for conspiring to overthrow the government of President Nyerere in December 1982. A British naval vessel and six Tanzanian jet fighters were to have been involved in the plot to kill Nyerere as he was leaving church. Nyerere stepped down as president last month after leading the country since independence in 1961.

Uganda

17/12/85 After nearly 4 months of fighting in Uganda and negotiations in Kenya, Uganda's ruling Military Council signs a peace agreement that gives the rebel National Resistance Army (NRA) equal power in running the country. Few details of the agreement are disclosed, but Yoweri Museveni, leader of the NRA, says he will be deputy chairman of the ruling Military Council and that a senior NRA official will take over the post of defense minister. The NRA's interim administration in the southwest will be dismantled, and there will be an immediate ceasefire and disarming of combatants, general elections, and a return to civilian rule. A new army, composed of both rebel and government troops, will be created. International observers are to be invited to Uganda to monitor the truce.

22/12/85 A contingent of 22 Kenyan Army officers and soldiers arrive to begin forming a 700-man monitoring force, established under a peace agreement signed on 17 December between Uganda's ruling Military Council and the NRA.

SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL-MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS  
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

PAGE:2

December 1985

31/12/85 Uganda imposes censorship on news about its security forces. Chief of Defense Forces Lieutenant General Bazilio Okello says there have been many recent inaccurate accounts about atrocities by government forces, and reports that a Press Security Committee is being formed to approve or disapprove all news items on security forces before they are printed or broadcast.

Zaire

24/11/85 The creation of the League of Negro-African States (LENA), President Mobutu's new foreign policy initiative that was to be unveiled on the 20th anniversary of Zaire's Second Republic, is delayed indefinitely following a series of diplomatic blunders that alienated leaders of many of the African states who were to participate in the League. Meanwhile, a Zairean commission is formed to redefine the objectives of the project that for the moment seems to be little more than a conservative alternative to the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

08/12/85 A Soviet-made plane transporting 44 armed and uniformed soldiers, including 40 Cubans, 3 Angolans, and 1 Cameroonian, from the Angolan city of Luena to Cabinda, makes an emergency landing in the Zairean city of Kiniangi, some 300 kilometers southeast of Kinshasa. The soldiers set the plane on fire, allegedly intending to destroy evidence of their nationality, and are intercepted by Zairean forces while making their way to Angola on foot. To avoid complicating Zaire's warming relations with Angola, Zairean authorities intend to repatriate the soldiers, but only after clarifying the affair.

Zambia/Zaire

27/11/85 Zambian and Zairean security forces exchange fire at the Kasumbalesa border post north of Chilianbonbwe. No casualties are reported. The direct cause of the shooting is unknown, but is probably related to a longstanding border dispute between the two countries.

SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL-MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS  
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

PAGE:3

December 1985

Indian Ocean Islands

Seychelles

29/11/85 Gerard Hoareau, the president of the Seychelles National Movement, a group of exiles opposed to the Rene government, is killed outside his London home. Hoareau was a member of the former government of James Mancham, which Rene overthrew in 1977. Mancham and several exiles accuse Rene of responsibility for the murder, a charge Rene denies. The incident is another in a series of killings or "disappearances" of suspected opponents of the Rene regime since 1977.

Sahel

Burkina/Mali

14/12/85 Burkinabe military forces raise tension in the disputed Agacher strip, the cause of a longstanding border dispute between Burkina and Mali, by accompanying census workers who had been given permission by Mali to conduct a survey of Burkinabe nationals in the disputed border region. Burkinabe officials claim that the presence of soldiers is necessary to protect the census workers from Malian interference.

31/12/85 The Malian and Burkinabe Governments accept diplomatic efforts by members of the Non-aggression and Defense Aid Agreement (ANAD) for a cease-fire in the armed conflict which erupted on 25 December when Malian troops moved to occupy four villages in the disputed Agacher strip region. Malian Mig-21s mounted attacks on the Burkinabe towns of Ouahigouya, Djibo, Dedougou, and Tougan on 25 and 26 December in which a number of civilians were killed, and Burkinabe airplanes staged a reprisal raid on the Malian town of Sikasso, also causing civilian deaths. On 29 December Burkinabe ground forces claimed to have halted a Malian armored column advance on the "western front" near the border not far from Sikasso, an area well to the southwest of the contested Agacher region. Diplomatic efforts to bring about a halt to the fighting had centered around two principal initiatives--one led by Libya and the accepted ANAD one. The cease-fire calls for an observer group composed of two officers from each of the ANAD states plus Benin to oversee the cessation of hostilities.

SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL-MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS  
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

PAGE:4

December 1985

Chad

00/12/85

A major shift in alliances appears to be underway in the wake of the Libreville Accord, signed on 11 November 1985 in the Gabonese capital. According to the agreement, Habre's government and the Action Coordination Committee of the Revolutionary Democratic Council, a coalition of Chadian opposition factions, decided to close ranks. Since the signing of the agreement, Transitional Government of National Unity (GUNT) leader Goukouni Oueddei appears to have broken with Libyan leader Qadhafi and to have formed a new coalition with Colonel Wadal Kamougue, Habre's major southern opponent. There is now talk that Goukouni, Kamougue, and ex-President Felix Malloum might form a national government with Habre, leaving Qadhafi out in the cold.

Sahel/West Africa

Burkina/Ghana/Mali/Senegal

00/12/85

Libyan leader Qadhafi undertakes an official state tour of four countries in West Africa. His first stop is in Senegal where he holds talks on the Chadian situation with current Organization of African Unity (OAU) Chairman Abdou Diouf. Qadhafi then visits with Malian President Traore, Ghanaian President Rawlings, and Burkinabe President Sankara. Of the four countries, only Senegal has not traditionally had good relations with Libya; the two countries broke off diplomatic relations in 1980. Prior to Qadhafi's visit to Dakar, there had been talk that the two countries would reestablish embassies in each others' capitals. While this may still happen, all that immediately came out of the visit was a new trade and development pact. Qadhafi's visits to Mali, Ghana, and Burkina were marked by a greater degree of ideological posturing as the leaders of each of those countries turned up the rhetoric to express solidarity with the Libyan leader, who responded with more pledges of aid. Of particular note is his offer to train Ghanaian Air Force personnel in Libya. Overall, Qadhafi's trip seems designed to make up for the bad feelings caused by the expulsion of foreign workers from Libya, many of whom were West African. He also seems anxious to resolve the Chadian question.

SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL-MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS  
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

PAGE:5

December 1985

Southern Africa

Angola  
30/11/85

According to National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) sources, a massive Soviet airlift of helicopters, missiles, armored vehicles, and infantry weapons into Angola is underway, preparing government forces for a new offensive against UNITA. The Soviet injection of military aid is on an unprecedented scale in the country, leading UNITA leaders to expect an offensive against Jamba, their stronghold in southeastern Angola, in the following weeks.

Angola/South Africa

15/12/85

The Angolan Military Command reports that South African forces are operating deep inside Angolan territory, and have advanced to a point just seven kilometers south of Ongiva, the capital of Cunene Province. The Military Command also claims that a force of mercenaries from South Africa's Buffalo Battalion is now in the village of Chiede, to the southeast of Ongiva. It is believed that these latest South African moves could herald the beginning of another major invasion, especially with the concentration on the Namibian side of the border of a large South African force supported by tanks and artillery.

19/12/85

South African television reports that the South African military mounted a raid into Angola from Namibia the week before, allegedly in pursuit of South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) guerrillas. The raid is the third since South Africa formally ended a 5-month occupation of southern Angola on 17 April. Four thousand South African soldiers remain massed on a southern strip of Angolan territory. The current raid, according to Angola, is designed to divert pressure from the continuing Angolan offensive against UNITA guerrillas, about 480 kilometers to the east.

Lesotho/South Africa

20/12/85

South African troops attack two homes in Lesotho's capital, Maseru, killing nine South African refugees. In Cape Town,

SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL-MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS  
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

PAGE:6

December 1985

the State Security Council warns South Africa's neighbors that they will all pay a heavy price if they permit African National Congress (ANC) insurgents to use their territory for attacks on South Africa. South Africa has sent troops into neighboring countries on several occasions in the past to attack what it claims are ANC bases.

Mozambique

16/12/85 Parliament announces that general elections will be held next year, despite continued terrorist activity throughout the country by the Mozambique National Resistance Movement (RENAMO). General elections, originally scheduled for 1982, have been postponed three times for military reasons.

Mozambique/South Africa

07/12/85 The Mozambican Government accuses the South African Government of masterminding the destruction of a bridge on the rail line linking the Mozambican capital, Maputo, to South Africa's Transvaal Province, putting the line out of operation. According to Mozambican officials, the bridge, 80 kilometers northwest of Maputo and 8 kilometers from the South African border, was attacked by specialized saboteurs who infiltrated from South Africa and were accompanied by RENAMO guerrillas. After the attack on the bridge, the group attacked the nearby railway station at Nkomati. The line carries South African and Zimbabwean goods to the Mozambican port of Maputo.

Namibia

02/12/85 The former commanding officer of Sector 10, Major General Joep Joubert, claims that the security forces are aware of South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) plans to infiltrate Ovambo and the farming area in the north. Just a few days earlier, one person was killed and another wounded in a landmine explosion near Onayena, about 20 kilometers southeast of Ondangwa in central Ovambo. The explosion was probably the work of SWAPO.

SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL-MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS  
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

PAGE:7

December 1985

South Africa

01/12/85 A federation of black trade unions, the largest ever formed by blacks in South Africa, is formally inaugurated in Durban. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), whose newly-elected president, Elijah Barayi, was vice president of the National Union of Mineworkers and a stalwart of the African National Congress (ANC) before it was banned, is the result of the federation of a number of black trade unions. The new president of COSATU, during the rally in Durban, called on the government to dismantle apartheid and declared the organization's support for withdrawal of investments in South Africa by foreign firms. COSATU could represent the most serious political challenge by black workers to white rule in the country's history.

03/12/85 President Botha lifts the state of emergency in 8 of the 38 magisterial districts where it had applied for the past 4 months. The emergency, first introduced on 21 July, still applies in 30 magisterial districts.

05/12/85 The government announces that all black South Africans will be able to buy freehold property in the black townships without having to qualify legally as township residents. At present, blacks have to meet rigid conditions before qualifying to own property in urban townships. The announcement comes after a goodwill visit to Soweto by Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning Chris Heunis, during which rioters hurled a handgrenade at police. The police claim that the grenade attack, which caused no injuries or damage, was not related to Heunis' visit.

06/12/85 Actions against black policemen in the townships by other blacks, who deplore their role in riot control, intensify as the number of policemen killed rises to at least 29 following a grenade attack in Soweto which also injured 3 other policemen. This attack, coupled with the earlier one during Heunis' visit, suggests that an arms cache has been

**SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL-MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS  
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

PAGE:8

**December 1985**

established in Soweto. In another incident, two black constables were found murdered in Kwazakhele near Port Elizabeth.

09/12/85 During the trial of 16 United Democratic Front (UDF) activists accused of high treason, state prosecutors withdraw the charges against 12 of the 16 activists. The arrests of UDF activists began a year ago when the government claimed that although the UDF itself was not part of a conspiracy to incite revolution in South Africa, there did exist underground structures inside the UDF that had unlawful aims against the state. The dropping of the charges against 12 of the accused lends support to those who claimed that the government's purpose in the trial was to crush the UDF.

14/12/85 A freelance cameraman, who was filming a peaceful funeral procession in the black township of Mamelodi near Pretoria for Dutch television, is shot in the leg by police in an apparently unprovoked attack. Other cameramen and soundmen working for foreign news organizations are also manhandled by the police and taken to a police station at gunpoint and briefly detained. Mamelodi is not covered under the state of emergency and the press restrictions imposed last month.

15/12/85 Six people are killed and five seriously wounded when a light truck sets off a landmine at the Chatsworth game farm, about 30 kilometers from the border town of Messina. The incident brings to 7 the number of landmine explosions in less than 3 weeks near Messina. The ANC claims responsibility for placing the bombs.

17/12/85 Two television cameramen working for a British agency are arrested on charges of inciting violence in Moutse, where

**SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL-MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS  
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

PAGE:9

**December 1985**

residents are protesting an order making them part of a tribal homeland. It is the most serious charge yet against foreign journalists in South Africa.

25/12/85 At least 53 people are reported to have been killed when 2,000 Zulus clash with 3,000 members of the Pondo tribe in Umbumbulu, 32 kilometers south of Durban. The fighting appears to have been caused by the rivalry between the two groups which dates back to the 19th century.

27/12/85 The police report that a new outbreak of political violence, which began 2 days before, has erupted in at least nine locations around the country. In one incident, in a township near Paarl, a winegrowing center in the Cape, a clash between black political groups that oppose each others' strategies of combating white rule resulted in three deaths. Unrest in black townships in the past few days and a spate of attacks that killed 11 whites in December have left the impression of a country in continued and deepening racial crisis.

28/12/85 Blacks set fires and hurl stones at police in five black townships. No injuries are reported. The day before, security forces fired on a large crowd of black antiapartheid demonstrators throwing stones at police vehicles in Steynsburg in northern Cape Province, killing three men and wounding one. Since 23 December, 24 persons have died in political violence, including 5 whites killed in a bomb attack on Christmas shoppers in a seaside resort south of Durban blamed on the ANC. The total number of persons who died during Christmas week in political violence, township murders, and tribal feuding rose to at least 103.

SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL-MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS  
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

PAGE:10

December 1985

30/12/85 Winnie Mandela, wife of imprisoned ANC leader Nelson Mandela, is arrested for the second time in a week for returning illegally to her home in Johannesburg. Mandela has become a symbol of resistance to the apartheid system in the eyes of many blacks, especially since South African authorities have seemed reluctant in the past to act against her in the face of increasing internal and international pressures for them to begin negotiations with the ANC. This was especially evident when the authorities served Mandela with a new restriction order on 21 December which removed many of the old restrictions against her, including her banishment to Brandfort.

Swaziland/South Africa

27/12/85 Swazi villagers claim that South African troops crossed into the southeastern Lavumisa region during the week and threatened to attack them if they gave shelter to African National Congress (ANC) guerrillas. Lavumisa residents also claim that a South African patrol fired at but missed a man who was trying to cross the border fence illegally. Earlier in the year, police and troops in Swaziland mounted a campaign to round up ANC members who had entered the country illegally from Mozambique. Swaziland secretly signed a nonaggression treaty with South Africa in 1982 and has the closest ties with South Africa of all its black neighbors.

Zambia

03/12/85 Police fire tear gas into crowds of university students as they gather for a protest march in Lusaka over the reintroduction of boarding school fees, part of the government's attempt to reduce public spending. No one is reported injured. A police spokesman says that police also used batons and tear gas the previous day to force students back onto the University of Zambia's main campus.

Zambia/Zaire

27/11/85 Zambian and Zairean security forces exchange fire at the Kasumbalesa border post north of Chilianbonbwe. No casualties are reported. The direct cause of the shooting is unknown, but is probably related to a longstanding border dispute between the two countries.

**SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL-MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS  
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

PAGE:11

December 1985

**Zimbabwe**

04/12/85

Prime Minister Mugabe visits the Soviet Union and announces that he and Soviet leaders, including Premier Gorbachev and Head of State Gromyko, are discussing the possibility of Soviet military aid to buttress the country against threats from South Africa. He also indicates that Soviet officials will visit Zimbabwe early next year. This development comes just days after South Africa warned that it might send troops into Zimbabwe in search of suspected African National Congress (ANC) insurgents after landmine explosions in a South African military area near the Zimbabwean border, a threat which is likely to sharpen tensions between the two countries and heighten the international aspect of the conflict. Mugabe's visit to the Soviet Union is his first since becoming leader of Zimbabwe in 1980, and is viewed by observers as a reconciliation with the Soviet leadership which had supported Mugabe's rival, Joshua Nkomo, during the struggle for independence.

**Zimbabwe/South Africa**

17/12/85

The Zimbabwean Government repeats its pledge not to allow guerrilla attacks by the African National Congress (ANC) to be mounted from its territory. The statement comes 2 days after a landmine near the border in South Africa killed six South African whites, and 3 weeks after the South African Government claimed that ANC guerrillas slipped into South Africa from Zimbabwe and planted landmines in northern South Africa which also killed one person and injured seven others. Two days earlier, in Durban, police clashed with thousands of blacks after a rally organized by the UDF to demand the release of ANC leader Nelson Mandela.

**West Africa**

**Ghana**

08/12/85

Three Ghanaian nationals are arrested by US Federal Customs agents near Newark (New Jersey) International Airport on charges that they conspired to buy missiles, antiaircraft guns, and other weapons on behalf of a guerrilla group in Ghana. The three, Joseph H. Mensah, John A. Boateng, and Kwassi J. Baidoo, have been linked through documents carried

SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL-MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS  
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

PAGE:12

December 1985

by Mensah to the Ghana Democratic Movement, for which they were purchasing the weapons.

Guinea

22/12/85

President Conte announces a major shakeup in the ruling Military Committee for National Recovery (CMRN) government. In the newly constituted CMRN, the number of civilian members is increased to 19 from 9, and 4 regional ministries are created to represent the 4 main ethnic groups in the country. Conte will retain strong control over the Defense, Security, Decentralization, Information, Planning and Cooperation Ministries whose directors are all members of his presidential staff. Finally, two of the regime's strong men, Facine Toure and Mamadou Balde, have lost their posts as Foreign Affairs and Administrative Reform Ministers. They are now to become "Ministers in Residence" for, respectively, the regions of Forest Guinea and Upper Guinea. By moving these two influential men away from the capital, Conte may be trying to clear the field of potential rivals for power.

Ivory Coast

18/12/85

After years of quiet diplomacy, Israel and Ivory Coast announce the resumption of diplomatic ties. Ivory Coast had severed official ties with Israel following the 1973 war, while at the same time encouraging Israel to continue participating in the Ivorian economy. Israeli spokesmen speculate that the Ivorian move will encourage Togo, Cameroon, and Ghana to follow suit. Ivory Coast joins Liberia, Zaire, Malawi, Lesotho, and Swaziland, all of which maintain full relations with Israel.

Nigeria

27/12/85

The Nigerian Government names 14 officers allegedly responsible for an unsuccessful plot to overthrow the government of President Ibrahim Babangida, who came to power after a coup in late August 1985. Among the 14 are General Mamman Vatsa, a member of the Armed Forces Ruling Council, and Brigadier M.M. Nasarawa, Commandant of the Nigerian Army's infantry school in Jaji. The government's announcement did not reveal who led the failed coup. The

**SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL-MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS  
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

PAGE:13

**December 1985**

plotters, primarily northerners and Muslims, allegedly oppose the growing influence of non-northerners, as well as the government's more liberal position on human rights. They also oppose Babangida's plan to reject an International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan of \$2.5 billion while cutting military salaries.

**Sierra Leone**

30/11/85 President Momoh names his first cabinet, which is heavily staffed with members of former President Stevens' cabinet. Overall, 10 out of 20 members in the new cabinet also served under Stevens. Momoh, who resigned from his position as Armed Forces Commander and filled the position with Brigadier Mohamed Tarawalli, decides to personally head the Defense and Public Enterprise Ministeries. This list of appointments is likely to cause some displeasure in that it creates an appearance of continuity with the Stevens era. In particular, the reappointment of Stevens' second vice-president, Francis Minah, as the new first vice-president is likely to be an unpopular decision.

**Togo**

04/12/85 After a 3 month respite, two new explosions rock the capital, Lome, killing one person and wounding two others. A series of three explosions in August and September 1985 caused no casualties. The Eyadema government blames Togolese political exiles living in Ghana for the explosions, particularly Christ and Bonito Olympio, the sons of former Togolese president Sylvanus Olympio. Others, pointing to the fact that the explosives in the December blast were of French origin, suggest that the government itself is responsible for all the incidents as a way of mobilizing popular support and sacrifices during a period of economic decline.